

The Vlachs of Krushevo. Nationalism and Violence in the Ilinden Uprising

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“La Macédoine est un champ d’illusions où rien n’est absolument vrai.”
(Maurice Gandolphe, 1904)¹

On September 16, 1903, the British consul Robert Graves reported from Salonica on the Turkish advance against insurgents in the vilayet of Monastir. Along with discussing the prospect of a famine, much of the report addressed the appalling situation of some sixty thousand refugees whose homes had been destroyed in the course of the fighting. The non-combatant local population had been massacred; the initiative having been taken mostly by the local Muslim population. Ragged Turkish troops who followed their example were at first inclined to distinguish between Exarchist Bulgarians and Greek Patriarchists, “but ended by killing without discrimination”. In Krushevo, “Turkish villagers of the neighborhood” had allegedly initiated the looting and killing. Graves closed on what he termed “an interesting detail” that concerned Krushevo’s sizeable Vlach community. According to his informant,

While the Greco-Wallachs side with the Greeks and so, in spite of ill-treatment at the hands of the troops and bashibozouks, maintain their loyalty to the Turkish government, those Wallachs who have been affected by the Romanian propaganda in many cases show open sympathy with the Bulgarian bands, and it is even stated, that it was on their invitation that the insurgents entered the Wallachian towns of Krushevo, Klissura, Neveska and Malovista.²

¹ Maurice GANDOLPHE, *La Crise Macédonienne. Enquête dans les vilayets insurgés* (septembre-décembre 1903). Paris 1904, 1. An earlier version of this paper has been published in German in: Thede KAHL/Johannes KRAMER/Elton PRIFTI (eds.), *Romanica et Balcanica. Wolfgang Dahmen zum 65. Geburtstag*. München 2015, 513-537. I am grateful to Jaime Hyatt for carefully editing the English manuscript.

² Graves to O’Conor, Salonica, 16 September 1903: FO 195/2157/510; Keith BROWN, *The Past in Question. Modern Macedonia and the Uncertainties of Nation*. Princeton, 2003, 99.

At a time when information on events in the remote provinces of the Ottoman Balkans was scarce, when diplomats and the press had a difficult time forming an accurate understanding of events, such detailed information was quite valuable. It added to the tendency not to put all the blame for abhorrent atrocities on Turkish troops. If the insurgent bands played a part in the mass violence and suffering of the Christian population, it seemed wise for the European powers to settle by simply giving humanitarian aid instead of getting militarily involved.

Nowadays, the Ilinden Uprising of 1903 is at the core of the Macedonian national narrative, with Krushevo at its focal point. When the insurgent bands had captured the town, they organised a local committee, which represented both the Vlach and the Bulgarian Slavic population. This short-lived committee lasted only ten days. It was later hailed as the “Krushevo Republic”, the first pledge to Macedonian independence and multi-ethnic statehood.³ Its heroes are Nikola Karev, the local military leader, and Pitu Guli, a Vlach, who sacrificed himself and his band in a heroic last stand against superior Ottoman forces. One might add Dinu Vangel, whom sources mention as the head of the provisional governing committee. Historical research on the political aims of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, which formed in 1893, and on its social basis in an emerging Slavic intelligentsia, has mainly focused on the intricate relationship between its Bulgarian, its supra-national, and its internationalist inclinations, all of which at some point found expression in programmatic declarations.⁴ It also confirmed the strategic intention behind the somewhat premature and improvised Ilinden Uprising; namely, to draw the Great powers into the conflict and spark a European War that would liberate Macedonia from Ottoman rule, just as the Balkan wars of 1877–1878 had liberated Bulgaria.⁵ Keith Brown analysed in depth how local memory of the events was transformed when socialist Yugoslavia offered a pension scheme to those who had participated in the uprising. This opened up the possibility to identify with a revolutionary cause, allowing the local population to both address the events in a heroic mode, and to gloss-over the divisive memory of vio-

³ Ljuben LAPE, *Kruševskata republika*, in: IDEM et. al (eds.): *Kniga za Ilinden. Zbornik na trudovi po povod 65-godišnata od ilindenskoto vostanie*. Skopje 1969, 131-139; James KRAPFL, *The Ideals of Ilinden. Uses of Memory and Nationalism in Socialist Macedonia*, in: John S. MCGIEL (ed.), *State and nation building in East Central Europe. Contemporary perspectives*. New York 1996, 297-316; Ulf BRUNNBAUER, *Ancient Nationhood and the Struggle for Statehood. Historiographic Myths in the Republic of Macedonia*, in: Pål KOLSTØ (ed.), *Myths and boundaries in South-Eastern Europe*. London 2005, 262-296, here 283f.

⁴ Duncan M. PERRY, *The Politics of Terror. The Macedonian Liberation Movement, 1893-1903*. Durham, London 1988; Tchavdar MARINOV, *We, the Macedonians. The Paths of Macedonian Supra-Nationalism (1878-1912)*, in: Diana Mishkova (ed.), *We, the People. Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeastern Europe*. Budapest, New York 2008, 107-137.

⁵ Fikret ADANIR, *Die makedonische Frage. Ihre Entstehung und Entwicklung bis 1908*. Wiesbaden 1979, 160-199.

lence. Moreover, the applications for a pension have left historians with detailed biographical accounts of the events.⁶

In line with the British consul's report, these biographical accounts hint at complex ethnic relations and their potential to explode into violence. Krushevo has more to tell than the story of Macedonian freedom fighters who bravely rose against Ottoman rule and suffered at the hands of indiscriminate Turkish retaliation. Yet, historians have given little attention to the split within the Vlach community which Graves provides as an interesting detail and which, as hitherto neglected German and Romanian sources show, was indeed a major element in the unfolding conflict. These sources, when confronted with the more familiar Bulgarian, Macedonian, and Greek ones, not only hint at the origins of violence, but also offer an explanation as to why looting Muslim neighbouring villagers had concentrated on the Vlach community and had largely spared the Bulgarian quarters. They show how national mobilisation within the Vlach community brought catastrophe upon a multi-ethnic town, only later to be reshaped into a myth of multi-ethnic cooperation and resistance against the foreign oppressor. Krushevo has quite an extraordinary story to be told.

Gustav Weigand, the founding father of Vlach and Romanian studies in Germany and an extensive traveller throughout the Balkans, visited Krushevo in June 1889 to collect linguistic material on what was then a major Vlach community. He left a vivid description of a prospering town in the mountains overlooking the plains of Prilep in the Monastir vilayet.

“Houses are solid, with many large windows, clean and furnished prettily inside. One even finds beds here in some houses, which is quite rare in Turkey, even in larger towns, since people are used to sleep on the carpet, half- or fully dressed and wrapped into a blanket. Mirrors, curtains and furniture hint at some prosperity. The café does not lack a billiard table and even beer is available. Beef, veal and mutton is more easily to be obtained than in the big city of Monastir.”⁷

Weigand was particularly impressed by the carvings in St. Nicholas church:

“These have been accomplished in a wonderfully, tasteful manner by a single person, it is being said, over a period of twenty years. The carvings as well as the filigree silver works show the Vlach craftsmen to be skillful and inventive, without models or schooling they produce true masterpieces.”⁸

⁶ BROWN, *The Past in Question*; IDEM, *Loyal unto Death. Trust and Terror in Revolutionary Macedonia*. Bloomington 2013, 99.

⁷ Gustav WEIGAND, *Die Aromunen. Ethnographisch-philologisch-historische Untersuchungen über das Volk der sogenannten Makedo-Romanen oder Zinzaren. Erster Band. Land und Leute*. Leipzig 1895, 33.

⁸ Ibidem, 33f.

Other visitors to Krushevo likewise acknowledged the finely crafted iconostasis as an artistic masterpiece.⁹

Wealth and prosperity resulted from far-reaching trade relations. Merchants from Krushevo travelled to Constantinople, Salonica, Romania, and the Habsburg Monarchy. Weigand traces the beginnings of the town back to the 18th century when Vlachs from Moschopolis and Grammos bought the small, secure, and healthy çiftlik, which offered refuge to their relatives from throughout the region whose towns suffered from regular raids and oppression.¹⁰ While Moschopolis fell into decay, Krushevo quickly developed into a prosperous trading centre. It maintained two messengers of its own: one to Constantinople and one to Romania to connect the tradesmen with their families back home, since sending money could not be entrusted to the Ottoman postal services.¹¹

Weigand estimated Krushevo's population at 12,000 inhabitants, among them some 7,000 Vlachs, 4,000 Bulgarians, and 800 Albanians.¹² Other estimates gave different numbers. Based on official Turkish sources for 1888, the geographer Vasil Kanchov calculated 4,950 Bulgarians, but only 4,000 Vlachs (Vlasi) and 400 Christian Albanians (Arnauts).¹³ Kanchov's desire to establish a Bulgarian majority is quite obvious. He acknowledged Bulgarian families to have more children, so he calculated a higher number of persons per household. Where Vlachs and Bulgarians intermarried, the entire family was likely to become Bulgarian.¹⁴ When the Romanian politician, pedagogue and poet Ioan Nenițescu came to Krushevo in 1892, he counted 14,500 Vlachs, but only 1,000 Bulgarians.¹⁵ Nikolaos Ballas in turn saw Krushevo's population to be largely Greek. In the wake of Greco-Vlach merchants from Naousa and Moschopolis who founded the town, Vlach shepherds, Albanians, and even some of the Bulgarians had adopted Greek culture.¹⁶ Ballas was a teacher at the local Greek school and therefore saw himself as part of this tradition.

Generally, it was beyond doubt that Krushevo had a Vlach majority. But demography and population statistics were part of a novel struggle for cultural prestige. The sensitive linguist Weigand was well aware of the fact that language had only recently become a divisive element within the Christian community:

⁹ Ioan NENIȚESCU, *De la românii din Turcia europeană. Studiu etnic și statistic asupra armânilor cu aproape una sută de gravuri și cu o hartă etnografică*. Craiova 2003, 116; BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 86.

¹⁰ WEIGAND, *Die Aromunen. Land und Leute*, 33.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ Vasil I. KANCHOV, *Makedonija. Etnografija i statistika*. Sofija 1900, 136, 240 [reprint Sofija 1996; online at <<http://www.promacedonia.org/vk/>>, retrieved 11 July 2015].

¹⁴ KANCHOV, *Makedonija*, 108, 136f.

¹⁵ NENIȚESCU, *De la românii din Turcia europeană*, 115.

¹⁶ BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 85; Nikolaos BALLAS, *Istoria tou Krousovou*. Thessaloniki 1962, 17-20 (I thank Nicole Immig, Jena, for her help in translating the relevant passages from Greek).

“The Christians shared common feelings, no matter which language they spoke. During the wars of liberation, Greeks, Albanians, Bulgarians and Vlachs still fought shoulder to shoulder, unaware of any national difference. Only when, in the wake of Serbs and Greeks, the Bulgarians equally roused themselves not only to shake off the Turkish yoke, but in establishing the Exarchate became independent from the pressures of the Greek Patriarchate, national feelings also awoke among Vlachs. They followed the example of the other nationalities, but national feelings were also kindled by men who had found employment in the Romanian Kingdom.”¹⁷

Weigand clearly foresaw the consequences. The Vlach aspirations at national consciousness could not conceal that their culture was about to decline. On this, he was quite in line with Kanchov. Even in prosperous Krushevo, Vlachs would fall back behind the Bulgarians, whose numbers were rising rapidly due to immigration from the plains and the greater number of children per household.¹⁸ Nor were they popular among their Bulgarian neighbours who despised them as scrooges (“Erzknauser”).¹⁹ Weigand’s prognosis was gloomy:

“The signs of decline in numbers and prosperity are visible everywhere. Every sizeable village shows numerous deserted and destitute houses in ruins. Churches that had formerly been in the middle of town now stand on its margins (Schipiska, Muskopolje, Vlacholivadhon, Kalarites and others). Chapels that have been erected and maintained by pious Christians are hardly to be found any more. The monasteries, which erstwhile had received rich presents from the wealthy, themselves have become places of poverty. Wells and fountains along lonesome trails have fallen into decay, the trails themselves are in a most desolate condition. Here and there we find steps, bridges and other precautions, but local authorities no longer care for them. People watch the decay, try to get along as good as they can, and patiently pay the tax for those streets that are useful only to the authorities themselves.”²⁰

According to Weigand, Krushevo would fall prey to the foreseeable decline of the scattered Vlachs (even if it might maintain its character somewhat longer) just as in nearby Monastir.

Prosperous Vlach merchants in Krushevo mainly considered themselves to be culturally Greek. They kept their distance from the Bulgarian Exarchate. Their children mostly attended the local Greek school. Only about one-fifth attended the Vlach high school (progymnasium) where, since 1879, four teachers gave instruction in Romanian and which was supported by Romanian subsidies.²¹ “Due to the competition between Greeks and Roma-

¹⁷ WEIGAND, *Die Aromunen. Land und Leute*, 304f.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 33.

¹⁹ IDEM, *Ethnographie von Makedonien. Geschichtlich-nationaler, sprachlich-statistischer Teil*. Leipzig 1924, 35.

²⁰ IDEM, *Die Aromunen. Land und Leute*, 300.

²¹ *Ibidem*, 306.

nians, Vlach towns and villages are better equipped with teachers than any other country in Europe, including Germany that is so blessed with schools.”²²

During his stay in Krushevo, Weigand enjoyed the hospitality of the teacher Steriu N. Cionescu, who played a key role in this competition. Inspired by Bulgarian Exarchist schools, Cionescu had twice applied in vain with the Ottoman authorities, before he finally received permission in 1876 to establish a Romanian school in Krushevo, one of the first in the region.²³ Various sources mention him as a driving force behind national Romanian activities in town. In 1910, the second Vlach congress elected the ageing Cionescu as its chairman.²⁴

Among his followers were the Vlach poet Taşcu Iliescu, and the writer and politician Nicolae Batzaria. Batzaria had briefly directed the Romanian elementary school in Krushevo, which he had attended as one of Cionescu’s pupils and which his father had helped to establish. In 1901, now a respected professor at the lyceum in Monastir, he launched the first Romanian periodical in the Ottoman Empire and established an association of Romanian teachers.²⁵

Krushevo thus became another site in the race for national belonging, which the Bulgarian Exarchate had opened. To Weigand, this was the most prominent sign that Vlach language and culture would not survive for much longer. Even though the Romanian schools were meant to conserve the Vlach language, they accelerated its decline, “because it brings a language to the adolescent youth, which deadens the feeling for the Vlach mother tongue, exposed already to Greek, Bulgarian, Turkish and Albanian influence, and leads it to faster decay. This influence is to be felt already, and it will even increase in the future.”²⁶

Up to this point, Greek culture had come naturally to educated, cosmopolitan Vlachs. Now, national aspirations even arrived in church services. On the outskirts of Krushevo, nationally minded Vlachs built a church where mass was to be sung in their mother tongue. To this purpose, they even tried to defect from the Greek Patriarchate to the Bulgarian Exarchate. Nikola Kirov-Majski, the Bulgarian chronicler of the Krushevo uprising, mentions Steriu Cionescu as the Vlach leader also in this undertaking.²⁷ The Turkish authorities

²² Ibidem, 308.

²³ Mihai-Virgiliu CORDESCU, *Istoricul şcoalelor române din Turcia, Sofia şi Turtucaia din Bulgaria şi al seminarilor de limba română din Lipsca, Viena şi Berlin*. Bucureşti 1906, 56f.; Max Demeter PEYFUSS, *Die aromunische Frage. Ihre Entwicklung von den Ursprüngen bis zum Frieden von Bukarest (1913) und die Haltung Österreich-Ungarns*. Wien, Köln, Graz 1974, 46–48; Nikola MINOV, *Vlaško-to prašanje i romanskata propaganda vo Makedonija (1860-1903)*. Skopje 2013, 116 and passim.

²⁴ Ionuţ NISTOR, ‘Problema aromână’ în raporturile României cu statele balcanice. 1903-1913. Iaşi 2009, 148.

²⁵ PEYFUSS, *Die aromunische Frage*, 46; BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 82f., 89; NENIŢESCU, *De la românii din Turcia europeană*, 124f.; CORDESCU, *Istoricul şcoalelor române*, 56, 59.

²⁶ WEIGAND, *Die Aromunen. Land und Leute*, 312.

²⁷ Nikola KIROV-MAJSKI, *Krušovo i borbite mu za svoboda*. Sofia 1935, 10; BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 82f.

agreed, but it is unclear whether the church was actually opened. According to Nenițescu, the patriarchist metropolitan bishop demanded that mass be read in Greek, but the Vlach population preferred to keep the new church closed, “rather than to bow to the absurd demands of the grecophile metropolitan.”²⁸ The Greek teacher Nikolaos Ballas recalled that in 1891, Cionescu was denied the right to sing psalms in Romanian. The resulting turmoil ended only when some of Cionescu’s more prominent followers were sent to a convent.²⁹ This was clearly linked to the attempt in 1892 to establish a Vlach Metropolitan province, which had equally originated in Krushevo, but had come to nothing.³⁰ Fifteen years later, Mihai-Virgiliu Cordescu mentioned the Romanian church, but neither he nor Kirov-Majski spoke of such a clash.³¹ Weigand simply described the national struggle to be particularly lively in Krushevo, “but the Greek party prevails by far”.³²

Even Nenițescu admitted, against his own political inclinations, that national sentiment was spreading too quickly in Krushevo. In his account, children formed enemy camps and fought bloody battles. Entire families became foes or were torn apart by the rift in what often appeared to be a generational conflict. Some houses in Krushevo bore a painting of the she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus above the entrance door.³³ To be sure, these observations predated the Ilinden Uprising by nearly a decade. Nenițescu had visited Krushevo at a time, when in Salonica and Sofia the Revolutionary Organisation had only just come into being.

At the turn of the century, Krushevo was an equally flourishing and endangered town. According to Weigand, “the fanaticism against infidels” urged Vlachs and others to emigrate since the Ottoman state was unlikely to provide protection against arbitrary looting.³⁴ He perceptively described the dangers of ethnic mobilisation and national conflict, which the Bulgarian Exarchate had brought upon the Vlachs in the same manner as the Slavs of Ottoman Macedonia. Yet he did not, as maybe he could not see a new menace that arose in this constellation when violent explosion of national strife would supersede and enforce cultural decline.

It took several days for European newspapers to cover the unfolding Ilinden Uprising. “Newest reports from Macedonia are rather unpleasant,” Vienna’s “*Neue Freie Presse*” wrote on August 7, 1903.³⁵ Based on regular dispatches from Constantinople and Salonica, the Austrian newspaper was usually the most up-to-date on events in the Balkans. During the preceding days and in the back of the newspaper, the activities of “Comité bands” and

²⁸ NENIȚESCU, *De la românii*, 117.

²⁹ BALLAS, *Istoria tou Krousovou*, 34–36.

³⁰ Gheorghe ZBUCHEA, *O istorie a românilor din Peninsula Balcanică. Secolul XVIII–XX*. București 1999, 134–139.

³¹ CORDESCU, *Istoricul școalelor române*, 57; KIROV-MAJSKI, *Krušovo*, 10.

³² WEIGAND, *Die Aromunen. Land und Leute*, 34; KANCHOV, *Makedonija*, 104.

³³ NENIȚESCU, *De la românii*, 120.

³⁴ WEIGAND, *Die Aromunen. Land und Leute*, 300.

³⁵ *Neue Freie Presse*, 7 August 1903, p. 6.

their attacks on railways and telegraph lines in the vilayets of Macedonia were only vaguely mentioned. Newspaper readers well remembered the bombings by Bulgarian terrorists in Salonica earlier that year. Unrest was flaring up again. Among the recent reports was mention that Komitadjis had destroyed the local office building and the telegraph station in Krushevo and had massacred fifty soldiers. Several nearby villages had also been attacked by throwing-bombs.³⁶ This was in line with an earlier report in the London "Times" and obviously based on information given by Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, the Ottoman General-Inspectorate of the Macedonian vilayets.³⁷

The following day brought a report by the Belgian "Agence Havas" from Salonica: "In Krushevo, the konak is said to have been destroyed by a dynamite attack; thirty officials may have lost their lives. Even Turkish families are said to have been slaughtered. Several battalions are on their march to Monastir."³⁸ This supported the information from Constantinople, and yet it betrayed insecurity. Had fifty soldiers been killed, or thirty officials and some Turkish families? Or the telegraphist and his kin, as the "Kölnische Zeitung" reported from Salonica?³⁹ Bloody murders had doubtlessly occurred in Krushevo, but reliable information was hard to come by, and newspapers even had difficulty informing their readers on the exact location of the town.⁴⁰ The reports, accurate or not, rather confirmed the cultivated Central European reader's preconceived notions about the Balkans. "The political volcano which rises in Macedonia once more hurls fire and sulfur from the gullet of its crater," Vienna's "Neue Freie Presse" commented on the obscure situation.⁴¹ The insurgents were insinuated to be harbouring a cruel plan. Shrouded by the "flowing dress of national enthusiasm," they deliberately nourished the unrestrained instincts of national and religious fervour, so as to provoke the Turkish and Albanian population into acts of revenge.⁴² The insurgents had allegedly acknowledged their aim to rouse European attention by acts of violence and to force the Great powers to intervene on behalf of Macedonian autonomy; or at least, to install a Christian governor. It was "in the general interest of cultivated humanity to push the unruly hordes back behind the limits of morality and civilisation".⁴³

Events in Krushevo and elsewhere in Macedonia were relevant only to the extent that they endangered the political order which the European powers had erected at the Berlin Congress in 1878. Soon, most of the attention was absorbed by reports on the murder of the Russian consul at Monastir, who had been shot by a Turkish sentinel when returning from a walk to a nearby monastery. Russian newspapers demanded punishment to be immediate and harsh. Within ten days, a hastily scheduled summary court sentenced the

³⁶ Ibidem.

³⁷ BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 67; *The Times*, 5 August 1903.

³⁸ *Neue Freie Presse*, 8 August 1903, p. 10.

³⁹ *Neue Freie Presse*, 11 August 1903, p. 5.

⁴⁰ *Neue Freie Presse*, 7 August 1903, p. 6; 14 August 1903, p. 3.

⁴¹ *Neue Freie Presse*, 8 August 1903, p. 1.

⁴² Ibidem; 11 August 1903, p. 1.

⁴³ *Neue Freie Presse*, 11 August 1903, p. 1.

culprit and one witness to death, and two others were sentenced to several years of incarceration. Their superiors were demoted, the death sentences immediately executed. The Vienna newspaper had at first supported the call for harsh reaction, but then began to feel somewhat uneasy. The imminent danger of a major war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire seemed to have been averted for the moment, but Ottoman compliance with Russian interference into its sovereign rights left a bitter taste.⁴⁴

Background reports on the fate of the uprising were riddled with nervousness and war scare. Turkish troops regained control over the insurgent territories, albeit with a shocking number of casualties. Reliable information was still difficult to obtain. Krushevo seemed to be one of the centres of the insurgency, as the reader could infer from the mention of numerous unknown Macedonian towns and villages as the sites of bombings and skirmishes. Its Vlach population was barely taken into account. An early report mentioned “Greek and Kutzo-Vlach bands which have clashed with the Komitadji bands, causing many casualties.”⁴⁵ Somewhat later, Kutzo-Vlach villages were, on the contrary, reported to side with the Komitadjis.⁴⁶ The Special Correspondent of the “Times” in Macedonia claimed that Bulgarians, Serbs, Greeks, Vlachs, Albanians, and even the Turks themselves were “revolutionists at heart”.⁴⁷ The ethnic dimension of the insurgency was no less bewildering than the events themselves.

On August 13, the “Neue Freie Presse” reported on violent clashes near Krushevo and Smilevo, which were said to have claimed 160 casualties on both sides. It was unclear whether the two towns were still under the control of the Komitadji bands, or if they had been recaptured by the Ottoman army.⁴⁸ The following day, a dispatch from Constantinople read that Krushevo was surrounded by 3,000 Turkish troops.⁴⁹ Once more, and in direct reference to the situation in Krushevo, the newspaper commented on the intentions of the insurgents: “All available reports bring to light that the insurgents do not all hope to liberate themselves from Turkish rule on their own. All they try to achieve by murdering, plundering and arson against their Muslim and Greek neighbours is to cause reprisals, so as to force the European powers thereby to intervene.”⁵⁰

The longer it took the Turkish troops to quell the uprising, the greater the concern that this scheme might actually succeed – even more so since the Muslim and Greek popula-

⁴⁴ *Neue Freie Presse*, 15 August 1903, p. 4; 17 August 1903, p. 2; 18 August 1903, p. 1; 19 August 1903, p. 3.

⁴⁵ *Neue Freie Presse*, 10 August 1903, p. 4; *The Times*, 12 August 1903.

⁴⁶ *Neue Freie Presse*, 13 August 1903, p. 4.

⁴⁷ *The Times*, 13 August 1903, p. 6; BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 68.

⁴⁸ *Neue Freie Presse*, 13 August 1903, p. 4; *The Times*, 13 August 1903, p. 6; 16–19 August 1906; most detailed on 22 August.

⁴⁹ *Neue Freie Presse*, 14 August 1903, p. 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

tion began to demand weapons to defend themselves. On the same day in Athens, a Greek voluntary unit was reported to have engaged in the first battle against Bulgarian bands.⁵¹

Contradicting reports on the recapture of Krushevo were to be read against this background. On August 15, both the “*Neue Freie Presse*” and the “*Times*”, relying obviously on the same sources, reported that Krushevo had already been taken. Two days later, this information was not yet confirmed.⁵² The following day, news read that the Komitadji bands voluntarily retreated from Krushevo.⁵³ Coverage on the same day in the “*Times*” was closer to the mark: whereas official telegrams spoke of negotiations “in order to avoid bloodshed” or to gain time to bring up more soldiers, private telegrams from Constantinople stated “that the Turkish troops have burned Krushevo and have massacred the inhabitants.”⁵⁴ Greek consular reports soon also focused on the devastation. Dynamite bombs had been thrown at the Greek church in Krushevo, they read, more than three hundred Greek houses had been set on fire, several Greeks had been killed.⁵⁵ The Greek charge d’affaires complained to the Porte about the killing of Greeks in Krushevo by Turkish soldiers.⁵⁶ Other sources later held Albanian units, redif or reserve battalions, to be responsible for the murders.⁵⁷ The London “*Times*” finally confirmed this version in the first detailed account. Irregular units had sacked Krushevo, and the Vlach quarters suffered most. While the Bulgarian quarters were largely unscathed, Greek houses, the Greek church and school, and over two hundred shops were burnt down. Women had been raped, and more than two hundred people – Bulgarians, “innocent Greeks and Wallachs” alike – had been killed.⁵⁸

The Ottoman government, which learned of the events only from the foreign press, was concerned that these reports might play into the hands of the insurgents. The Grand Vizier promised a formal investigation into the “atrocities of Krushevo,” those responsible would be punished. The sultan himself donated three hundred pounds for the Greek victims and ordered the church to be rebuilt immediately. At the same time, the Ottoman embassy in Vienna announced that the Bulgarian bands had committed those crimes that the Greek and Vlach officials bemoaned.⁵⁹

It took some time for the fog to clear. What actually happened in Krushevo only gradually became public. Early reports by horrified Europeans who visited the town were fol-

⁵¹ Ibidem.

⁵² *Neue Freie Presse*, 15 August 1903, p. 4; 17 August 1903, p. 3; *The Times*, 15 and 17 August 1903.

⁵³ *Neue Freie Presse*, 18 August 1903, p. 4.

⁵⁴ *The Times*, 18 August 1903; BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 68f.; *Neue Freie Presse*, 21 August 1903, p. 1.

⁵⁵ *Neue Freie Presse*, 21 August 1903, p. 2.

⁵⁶ *Neue Freie Presse*, 23 August 1903, p. 6.

⁵⁷ *Neue Freie Presse*, 25 August 1903, p. 3.

⁵⁸ *The Times*, 22 August 1903, p. 3; BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 70.

⁵⁹ *Neue Freie Presse*, 7 September 1903, p. 4; 8 September 1903, p. 3; 11 September 1903, p. 8; Dragi ĆORĀIEV / Lili BLAGADUŠA (eds.), *Turški dokumenti za ilindenskoto vstanie od sultanskot fond “Jild’z”*. Skopje 1997, 94 (Doc. 90) and 103f. (Doc. 104).

lowed up years later by observations and memories of the inhabitants themselves.⁶⁰ Komitadji bands entered the city on Sunday, 2 August (20 July in the Julian calendar), the day of the prophet Elijah, the Ilinden, and had routed the Turkish garrison.

The insurgents did not come as strangers to Krushevo. Early on, the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation had won supporters both among the Bulgarian and the Vlach populations. Its leaders Nikola Karev and Pitu Guli were born there, and many of the rebels were locals. Since the turn of the century, and with its far-reaching connections, the town had become a focal point of socialist propaganda. Macedonian socialists held their first conference near Krushevo in 1900. Within the revolutionary movement, socialists around Vasil Glavinov and Nikola Karev were pleading consistently for a multi-ethnic, cantonal organisation of Macedonia.⁶¹ Glavinov had brought two trunks of socialist literature to “raise the spirit of the youth,” as one inhabitant remembered decades later.⁶² On a more practical note, Mate Petrov Boškoski, a shop owner in Krushevo, already began to purchase and store rifles, gunpowder, and bullets before 1900. The young Donka Budžakoska (Bučakovska), also from Krushevo, recalled that she had been entrusted with secret preparations for a foundry to manufacture cartridges in her house.⁶³ Nikola Zdravski-Vince formed an armed group and trained them for fighting.⁶⁴ Preparations for an armed uprising do not seem to have been seriously hampered by the Turkish raids that claimed several casualties and a number of arrests.⁶⁵ Mate Petrov Boškovski later claimed that Komitadji leaders actually laid out their plans for the uprising in his house a few weeks earlier, Pitu Guli among them.⁶⁶ Guli, the most prominent Vlach among the Komitadjis in popular memory, embodies the Vlach part in the Ilinden Uprising. Yet, his participation in this meeting alone isn’t enough to substantiate the “interesting detail” which Graves reported on (i.e. the supposed Vlach invitation to the insurgents). The preparatory responsibilities clearly lay among the Slav population.

⁶⁰ Dančo ZOGRAFSKI (ed.), *Izveštai od 1903-1904 godina na avstriskite pretstavnici vo Makedonija*. Skopje 1955, 79-86 [Doc. 24. August Kral, avstriski konzul vo Bitola. Do grofot Agenor fon Goluchowski, Minister za nadvorešni raboti na Austro-Ungarija]; Angelos CHOTZIDIS / Basil C. GOUNARIS / Anna A. PANAYOTOPOULOU (eds.), *The Events of 1903 in Macedonia as presented in European Diplomatic Correspondence*. Museum of the Macedonian Struggle. Thessaloniki 1993, 78f., 82-85, 95f.; Frederick MOORE, *The Balkan Trail*. London 1906, 262-276; Gaston ROUTIER, *La Question Macédonienne*. Paris 1903, 169-175; GANDOLPHE, *La Crise Macédonienne*, 58-63; G. BAŽDAROV, *Iz makedonskata zemja: vpečatlenija i beležki*. Sofija 1926, 154-161.

⁶¹ Hristo ANDONOV-POLJANSKI (ed.), *Documents on the Struggle of the Macedonian People for Independence and a Nation-State*, Vol. 1: *From the Settlement of the Slavs in Macedonia up to the End of the First World War*. Skopje 1985, 402-404; MARINOV, “We, the Macedonians”, 122.

⁶² BROWN, *Loyal unto Death*, 63.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, 195-198; *idem*, *The Past in Question*, 15f.

⁶⁴ *idem*, *Loyal unto Death*, 9.

⁶⁵ KIROV-MAJSKI, *Krušovo i borbite mu*, 20-23; Nicolae BATZARIA, *In închisorile turcești*. Brăila ca. 1925, 175f.

⁶⁶ BROWN, *Loyal unto Death*, 195.

Pitu Guli's biography gives an impression of how social revolutionary fervour and national mobilisation played out in relation to one another.⁶⁷ Guli, born in Krushevo in 1865, was of humble descent. His nickname "Pitu the Vlach" attests to his ethnic background. When his father died, Pitu Guli went to Sofia as a migrant labourer. Soon he joined a band of Bulgarian irregulars. A premature advance onto Macedonian territory in 1885 ended in a fiasco. Guli spent years in Ottoman prisons. Back in Krushevo, he joined the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation in 1895. The teacher Nikolaos Ballas considered Pitos Goulis still to be a fellow Greek when he saw him ride into Krushevo with his Bulgarian band on the first day of the uprising.⁶⁸ Georgios Ditsias, another Greek eyewitness to the uprising, equally addressed him as a compatriot and asked in the name of Greek humanity to give mercy to the suffering population.⁶⁹ Guli was killed at Mechkin Kamen (Chiatra Ursului) near Krushevo in a heroic stand against overwhelming Turkish troops, whereas the remaining Komitadji bands fled in order to continue their fight elsewhere.⁷⁰ The Macedonian national anthem mentions him by his Vlach name. He has a firm place in the national pantheon of Bulgarian-Macedonian revolutionaries, just like three of his sons who figure under the names of Taško Gulev (Šula Guli), Nikola Gulev (Lakja Guli), and Sterju Gulev. They defy national claims.⁷¹ Pitu Guli found his way into the Macedonian revolutionary movement because of his social background. As far as we know, he had no direct contacts with the Romanophiles before the uprising. Yet the latter's affinity with the Bulgarian Exarchist strife for national emancipation accounted for the appeal that the revolutionaries had for the Romanophiles as well, and with them, for a substantial portion of Krushevo's Vlach population. Nicolae Batzaria, who was of equally humble background but had gained a reputable position as a teacher, recalls a telling incident in this respect. Shortly before the uprising, he fell into the hands of a Komitadji band near Kichevo. The captain turned out to be his friend and colleague Petar Atsev, a former teacher at the Bulgarian elementary school in Krushevo. Batzaria turned down the invitation to join the rebels who had stolen a goat from a Vlach innkeeper the day before. They parted with tears in their eyes.⁷² The tale of two former Krushevo teachers, one Vlach, one Bulgarian, embracing each other in their struggle for national liberation and quarrelling with each other over the threat of this struggle to Vlach property, reveals Batzaria's talent as an author of youth novels. It is somewhat metaphorical. Social revolution and national emancipation were twins, but not identical.

⁶⁷ For different readings of Pitu Guli's biography, see the respective Wikipedia entries in English, Macedonian, Bulgarian, and Romanian, as well as IDEM, *The Past in Question*, 195-201.

⁶⁸ Constantin VAVOUSKOS, *Der Beitrag des Griechentums von Pelagonien zur Geschichte des neueren Griechenlands*. Thessaloniki 1963, 35; BALLAS, *Istoria tou Krousovou*, 39.

⁶⁹ BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 95f.

⁷⁰ For the diverse interpretations of Guli see *ibidem*, 198-201.

⁷¹ <http://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/Питу_Гули>; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pitu_Guli>, retrieved 7 August 2015.

⁷² BATZARIA, *In închisorile turcești*, 19-23.

Once the uprising had begun, it was an equally Slav and Vlach movement which tried to force national emancipation by violent means.⁷³ Many inhabitants of Krushevo, both Slav and Vlach, joined the Komitadjis on the spot. The British Journalist Frederick Moore even believed the latter to be a majority.⁷⁴ But they did little to control the events. On the contrary, whoever sided with the Komitadji came under the spell of Bulgarian nationalism in its Macedonian revolutionary version. At the hey-day of the uprising, the Komitadjis behaved like the masters of the town, sang Bulgarian songs and waved Bulgarian flags and revolutionary red banners. According to the version told by the Greek priest Georgios Ioannidis, they even forbade to speak any other language than Bulgarian.⁷⁵ No other evidence corroborates this charge. Within the divided Vlach community, Patriarchist Grecophiles were sure to be apprehensive of the agenda for social revolution and national liberation. They were sure to see the insurgents as a menace, both to their properties and (soon) to life-and-limb, whereas the Romanophiles were more likely to side with the Komitadji. For many, regardless of ethnic and religious background, joining the insurgents might simply have seemed a comparatively safer option, at least at that moment.

The insurgents were prudent enough not to further alienate the Grecophiles, but to include them in the attempt to run the town and its defence. Three days after they entered Krushevo in triumph, they assembled some sixty notables of the various groups and ordered them to form a committee to take responsibility for the town and to supply the uprising. Accounts differ as to the details, but they all agree that it united representatives of all major groups. The Austrian consul in Bitola reported that the newly formed local council consisted of two Grecophiles, two Bulgarians, and one Romanian (Romanec).⁷⁶ This dovetails with the account by Frederick Moore who mentions two Bulgarians and three Vlachs, "to provide for the needs of the day and current affairs".⁷⁷ Like the French journalist Maurice Gandolphe, Moore obviously relied on information received from the Turkish General-Inspectorate Hilmi Pasha.⁷⁸ This was designed specifically for the European public, to underline the scope of the threat which the uprising posed to the Ottoman authorities, and to justify its violent reaction. They gave no names.

On the contrary, eyewitness accounts actually name the members of what is alternately given as a local council, a commission or a provisional government. But this information is somewhat contradictory. The standard account of the uprising by Nikola Kirov-Majski, a teacher at the Bulgarian Exarchist school and cousin of Nikola Karev, names six people

⁷³ PERRY, *The Politics of Terror*, 175-178.

⁷⁴ MOORE, *The Balkan Trail*, 273; MINOV, *Vlaškoto prašanje*, 388-390.

⁷⁵ VAVOUSKOS, *Der Beitrag des Griechentums*, 30f.

⁷⁶ ZOGRAFSKI, *Izveštai*, 79; CHOTZIDIS / GOUNARIS / PANAYOTOPOULOU, *The Events of 1903*, 95f. (Kral to Goluchowski).

⁷⁷ MOORE, *The Balkan Trail*, 266.

⁷⁸ GANDOLPHE, *La crise macédonienne*, 55-60.

and indicates their function within the newly formed commission.⁷⁹ Without any further biographical background, this information seems as worthless as it would have been to European newspaper readers at the time. Fortunately, they partly match with earlier accounts by the French journalist Gaston Routier and by Georgi Baždarov. Routier had not been on the spot himself but had access to a letter that was allegedly written right after the events. A local resident of Krushevo had written to his brother-in-law in Sofia, a tradesman of Romanian origin.⁸⁰ Baždarov recorded a conversation he had with an eyewitness in 1918.⁸¹ They all mention the tradesman Teohar Neškov as serving on the committee. Baždarov equally substantiates the membership of Mito (Dimitar) Sekulov, also a tradesman, as given by Kirov-Majski. Routier, on the other hand, substantiates the name Gjorgji Čače, a Grecophile who was possibly of Albanian descent and a teacher at the Greek school. Routier is the only one to give the name of Nicolae Petrașincu, who was known to be a patron of the local Romanian school, and of one Tashco Ilienu, who might be identified as the Romanian teacher Tașcu Iliescu. Kirov-Majski names neither of the two but substantiates an involvement of the local Romanian school by naming Nicolae Balliu, a long-standing teacher at the Romanian school, as a member of the committee.⁸² Though earlier accounts do not fully support Kirov-Majski's version in detail, they substantiate the general claim that the committee represented all major groups of the town's population. It also seems that the Romanian oriented Vlachs took a more prominent position than their Grecophile kin. Still, the meetings took place in the Greek school, as mentioned in several accounts.⁸³

Finally, Kirov-Majski names Dinu Vangel as the chairman of the committee. Little is known about Vangel. In Kirov-Majski's summary remark that members of all big nationalities in town were being represented, "Bulgarians, Vlachs and Grekomans (Vlachs and Albanians)," he would most likely figure as a Grekoman or Vlach Patriarchist.⁸⁴ One of the insurgents remembered decades later how he set Dinu Vangel's café on fire during the first day of the uprising, "because there were Turks hiding there too".⁸⁵ Should this be correct, Macedonian mythology would hail a Greek-minded, patriarchist, Vlach innkeeper (who

⁷⁹ KIROV-MAJSKI, *Krušovo i borbite mu*, 49. Aleksandar T. HRISTOV (ed.), *Zbornik na dokumenti za sozdanje na makedonskata državnost (1893-1944)*. Skopje 1970, 85 (Doc. 21). For an English translation see ANDONOV-POLJANSKI, *Documents*, 436f. (Doc. 277); MINOV, *Vlašhoto prašanje*, 389f. On KIROV-MAJSKI's account see BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 80-83.

⁸⁰ ROUTIER, *La Question Macédonienne*, 171.

⁸¹ BAŽDAROV, *Iz makedonskata zemja*, 154-161. I had no direct access to the detailed eyewitness account given by the Greek G. N. Ditsias, which is succinctly summarised by Keith Brown: BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 92-99.

⁸² CORDESCU, *Istoria școalelor române*, 59, 236.

⁸³ ROUTIER, *La Question Macédonienne*, 171; BALLAS, *Istoria tou Krousovou*, 42; KIROV-MAJSKI, *Krušovo i borbite mu*, 50.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 49.

⁸⁵ BROWN, *Loyal unto Death*, 196.

was among the first to suffer the loss of his property during the uprising) as the first prime minister in the modern history of Macedonia.

The establishment of the committee, which has later been celebrated as the government of the “Krushevo Republic” and as the first attempt at a social revolutionary, multi-ethnic, Macedonian state in modern times, was a reaction to an imperative demand. The Turkish garrison had ceased to exist; the local inhabitants themselves now had to preserve order. The insurgents had to be provisioned with food, clothing, and shoes. They demanded a high levy, which had to be collected. If the town was to be held against the Turkish forces, the defence needed to be organised. A wooden cannon demonstrated the determination of the Komitadjis.

Surprisingly, in spite of its violent beginnings, the uprising tended to cover up the ethnic and religious divisions within the town. Rather than deepening the split within the Vlach community or taking control of the movement, Romanophile Vlachs seem to have played an intermediary role in the commission between Grecophile Vlach Patriarchists and Slav Exarchists. Choosing a Grecophile as chairman might also be interpreted as an act of determination by the local population to hold its own against the insurgents. Overwhelmed by a predominantly Slav movement and expecting the imminent onslaught of Turkish troops, the inhabitants of Krushevo chose to stick together, within a hostile Muslim environment.

Conflicts with surrounding villages had long been an issue. As a German traveller remarked in the late 1850s, those traveling to Krushevo should fear attacks by neighbouring Albanian villagers, and therefore try to arrive before sunset.⁸⁶ There is some evidence that recurring attacks by Albanians might be one of the reasons why the Macedonian revolutionaries attracted more followers in Western Macedonia than in the safer Eastern regions, even though they were closer to Bulgaria.⁸⁷ Despite the Revolutionary Organisation’s attempts to curb the level of violence, revolutionary activity and the influx of arms fuelled a spiral of mutual attacks. According to Keith Brown’s evidence, Krushevo was a focal point of ethnic violence in the months preceding the Ilinden Uprising: starting with the murder of a Turkish field guard near Zhvan in March 1902, and a series of murders and retributions in early 1903.⁸⁸

This experience forms the background to what later became famous as the “Krushevo Manifesto,” a devoted plea by the insurgents with their Muslim neighbours for interethnic cooperation in the formation of a common Macedonian state. However, events tell a different story. The Bulgarian military chronicle mentions two attacks on Krushevo by bashi-bozouks from the nearby village of Arilevo during the first days of the uprising. Unlike earlier attacks of this sort, the town was now able to defend itself. The Supreme Staff of

⁸⁶ Johann Georg von HAHN, *Reise von Belgrad nach Salonik. Nebst vier Abhandlungen zur alten Geschichte des Morawagebietes*. Wien 21868, 182f.

⁸⁷ BROWN, *Loyal unto Death*, 161f.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, 164f., 177f. See also MARINOV, “We, the Macedonians”, 125.

the insurgents warned the surrounding villages to leave the Christian population in peace. Any offenders would be seriously punished.⁸⁹ The response was meek:

“We understand by the tenor of your letters that you are not evil men, that you have not left your hearths in order to attack the peaceful population (like ours), and that you are opposed only to the evildoers and to the Government which protects them. But those whom you seek are not to be found among us. They have fled to the towns. As for ourselves we promise to remain quiet. If your intention is to kill the innocent you have only to come here. May God help those whose quest is justice! We have sent on your other letters to the neighbouring villages, which are also of our way of thinking.”⁹⁰

An eyewitness remembered the conflict: Turkish visitors to the local market had been killed, and after a proclamation had warned neighbouring villagers to stay calm, further attacks had been beaten off.⁹¹

In the ensuing exchange of letters, the insurgents were concerned not only with fending off their Muslim neighbours, but also tried to secure their neutrality during the expected clash with the Turkish army.⁹² A peculiar mixture of appeals for cooperation and unveiled threats underscores a sententious proclamation by which the insurgents, according to the British journalist H. N. Brailsford, declared their aims to their neighbours at the beginning of the uprising:

“We are taking up arms against tyranny and barbarism: we are acting in the name of liberty and humanity; our work is above all prejudices of nationality or race. We ought therefore to treat as brothers all who suffer in the somber Empire of the Sultan. Today all the Christian populations are wretched, nor must we except even the Turkish peasants. We regard the Turkish Government as our sole enemy, and all who declare themselves against us whether as open foes or as spies, and all too who attack old men, women, and defenseless children instead of attacking us. It is against them that we direct our blows and from them we shall exact vengeance.”⁹³

This document, which is mentioned also by the Austrian consul in one of his reports,⁹⁴ most likely provided the model for the Krushevo Manifesto. In its canonised version, the Manifesto comes from a play named “Ilinden” that Kirov-Majski staged in Sofia in the early 1920s. In this play, a Bulgarian teacher reads out a proclamation to the Turkish villages

⁸⁹ Makedonija i Odrinsko (1893-1903). Memoar na Vätreshnata Organizacija. Sofija 1904, 124f.; KIROV-MAJSKI, Krušovo i borbite mu, 54f.

⁹⁰ Henry Noel BRAILSFORD, Macedonia. Its Races and their Future. London 1906, 153. The original text is given in Makedonija i Odrinsko, 125 and in KIROV-MAJSKI, Krušovo i borbite mu, 57.

⁹¹ BAŽDAROV, Iz makedonskata zemja, 159.

⁹² KIROV-MAJSKI, Krušovo i borbite mu, 55-58.

⁹³ BRAILSFORD, Macedonia, 152.

⁹⁴ ZOGRAFSKI, Izveštai, 70.

in which he implores the union of all Macedonia's sons, united in the struggle against tyranny and oppression.⁹⁵ It is doubtful that the document itself originated during the uprising.⁹⁶ Drawing on earlier proclamations of the revolutionaries for interethnic cooperation, it rather condenses the correspondence into a literary version. As such, it is a remarkable text. In a histrionic gesture, it invokes the peaceful intentions of the insurgents and appeals to their Muslim neighbours to join them devotedly, and at the very least, not to support the enemy. This echoes the reproach towards the insurgents that they themselves had deliberately provoked Muslim vengeance in order to cause the European powers to intervene. With hindsight, it thus tries to pre-empt the argument that the rebels were responsible for the later sack of Krushevo by Turkish forces. The attempt to disprove a common argument turns into an early strategy to cope with traumatic events.

The way the document juxtaposes the 'us' and 'them' that pervade the Manifesto is equally instructive. The authors introduce themselves as "we, your perennial neighbours, friends and acquaintances from beautiful Krushevo and its pretty villages, regardless of faith, nationality, sex or conviction." This tenor is not sustained for long. Previous conflicts soon echo in the wording:

"You know very well that we are not evil and you understand that it is suffering that made us risk all, to live humanly or to die heroically! [...] We have not taken up arms against you, for that would be shameful [...] we have not risen to kill and to rob, to burn and to steal [...] we have not risen to convert people to Christianity, to dishonour your mothers and sisters, wives and daughters [...] We have taken up arms only to safeguard our property, our lives, our belief and our honour. We are not disloyal to the country that gave us our life, we are not robbers and plunderers, but revolutionaries, sworn to die for rights and liberty. We rise against tyranny and slavery [...] Join us, Muslim brothers, in order to attack our common enemies! Join us under the flag of 'Autonomous Macedonia'! Macedonia is our mother and calls for help."⁹⁷

The repeated appeal to a common Macedonia as "mother of all her offspring" holds the idea of a liberal polity; and yet, it implores first and foremost the common struggle, the final heroic act of violence that will overcome all suppression and all conflicts. Not just the Muslim neighbours were being addressed in this way, but all residents of Krushevo and its surroundings. Only struggle and death would form the overarching community, the seeds

⁹⁵ For the text of the Manifesto see "Kruševskiot Manifest", in: HRISTOV (ed.), *Zbornik*, 83f. For an English translation see ANDONOV-POLJANSKI, *Documents*, 432-434. Also available at <https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Krushevo_Manifest>, 4 August 2015; BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 204f.

⁹⁶ Ibidem, 206, 230f.; BRUNNBAUER, *Ancient Nationhood*, 284. On the programmatic precursors of the Manifesto as an argument to support its authenticity see VERA VESKOVIĆ-VANGELI, *Borbata za nezavisna Makedonska Republika od Ilinden do ASNOM*. Skopje 1995, 37-63.

⁹⁷ This translation follows BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 204f.

of which were being laid in the Macedonian origins. Instead of mutual respect, joint struggle would enable this community to shape a common future.

“‘Liberty or Death’ is written on our foreheads and on our bleeding flag. We have raised this flag, and there is no way back. If you consider us your brothers and wish us well; if you think to live with us in the future, as you have lived up to now; if you are honourable and faithful sons of our dear mother Macedonia, then grant us this one great boon. Do not join the enemy. Do not take up arms against us. And do not terrorise Christian villages!
God bless our holy fight for rights and liberty!
Long live the fighters for liberty and all the brave sons of Macedonia!
Hurrah for Autonomous Macedonia!”

Even the literary wording preserves traces of the preceding clashes. Its pathos conceals the painful experience that the long-standing conflict with the Muslim neighbours had begun anew. The Manifesto, as given by Kirov-Majski, reshapes the harsh reaction of the insurgents into a wishful plea for cooperation. At the same time, the slogan “Liberty or death” anticipates imminent defeat. Rather than breaking the ground for a Macedonian state, the Krushevo Manifesto was meant to provide a means of how to live with this defeat and how to cope with the tension left behind. The heroic community which the Manifesto implored would come into being only decades later, with idealizing hindsight.

When the Ottoman army began its advance on Krushevo, the insurgents fled. It was generally expected that the troops would loot only the Bulgarian quarters. Instead, the Vlach population suffered far worse. The Greek teacher Ballas gave a drastic account of events:

“The fire and the plundering by the bashibozouks lasted throughout the night. They broke into houses and shops and pillaged, set them on fire, arrested men and women, tortured them, and robbed money.”

The following day, the survivors faced the full extent of horrors:

“They saw those who had been slain during the night lying prostrate on the streets, mangled by dogs and pigs [...] after the great fire, the streets were full with burning rubble [...] and – most terribly – before their eyes the town centre with the market and the rich church abandoned to flames blazing to the sky and shrouded by thick clouds of black smoke [...] Apart from the Bulgarian quarter, on which no soldier or bashibozouk had set foot, all the other, Greek quarters were devastated [...]”⁹⁸

⁹⁸ BALLAS, *Istoria tou Krousovou*, 50-55. Quoted here along VAVOUSKOS, *Der Beitrag des Griechentums*, 37. On Ballas see BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 83-92.

Frederick Moore, who came to Krushevo three weeks after the insurgence, gave a similar picture:

“The first night was demoniacal. Three hundred houses were in flames and dashing in and out among them were yelling fiends, firing rifles, slashing Christians who happened to be in their way, fighting among themselves, breaking in doors, splashing oil and firing houses, loading wagons and pack-animals. Money, jewellery, silver plate, linen, furniture, bedding, clothes, carpets went away to the Turkish villages in the neighbourhood.”⁹⁹

According to Moore, the plunderers knew precisely that there was nothing to get from the impoverished Slav peasants and workers. They had their eyes on the riches of the Vlach quarter.¹⁰⁰ The looters and their victims seemed to know each other from the weekly markets.¹⁰¹ To Brailsford, who travelled the region during the following winter for the British Relief Fund, the Bulgarians had behaved “grossly unchivalrous,” when they left their Vlach neighbours to the mercy of the Turkish plunderers. To him, just as to Moore, the latter had acted according to their nature.¹⁰² In the light of such preconceptions, it was of little help that the Turkish General Inspectorate played down the events and pointed out to Western visitors that he had punished more than fifty bashibozouks and had dismissed the others in dishonour.¹⁰³ By this time, the earlier Turkish version that blamed the rebels themselves for the fire had become untenable.¹⁰⁴

Krushevo, which owed its existence and its prosperity to its presumably safe location, had now been devastated in an act of plundering. This plundering originated in the struggle for national liberation, but in the end, did not differ from earlier times. The town that Gustav Weigand had visited in 1889 was destroyed. The plunderers had torn out the rich carvings in St. Nicholas church before they set it on fire.¹⁰⁵ Nicolae Petrașincu, a key figure among the Romanophile Vlachs, had lost his house and mourned the death of his mother.¹⁰⁶ National mobilisation and the attempt to topple and replace the Ottoman state had wrought destruction. The focus of destruction on the prosperous Vlach quarters would deepen frictions among the various groups, between Christians and Muslims, between Vlachs and Slavs; and within the Vlach community, between Romanophiles and Greco-philés. The memories of the violence and destruction, and also their ten days of freedom,

⁹⁹ MOORE, *The Balkan Trail*, 272.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, 273f. See also the account by the Austrian consul: ZOGRAFSKI, *Izveštai*, 80.

¹⁰¹ ROUTIER, *La Question Macédonienne*, 174f.

¹⁰² BRAILSFORD, *Macedonia*, 154.

¹⁰³ GANDOLPHE, *La Crise Macédonienne*, 61; MOORE, *The Balkan Trail*, 260; CHOTZIDIS / GOUNARIS / PANAYOTOPOULOU, *The Events of 1903*, 107 (McGregor to Graves).

¹⁰⁴ Aleksandar STOJANOVSKI (ed.), *Turski Dokumenti za Ilindenskoto Vostanie*. Skopje 1993, 129-132 (Doc. 78).

¹⁰⁵ MOORE, *The Balkan Trail*, 270f.

¹⁰⁶ STOJANOVSKI, *Turski dokumenti*, 209-212 (Doc. 172).

would smoulder on. The experience of Krushevo is unique in that the potential for further ethnic violence was curbed, and the seed of genocide prevented to sprout.¹⁰⁷

On August 18, 1903, one week after the uprising, the painter Nikola Martinovski was born in Krushevo. Today, he is being honoured as a distinguished Macedonian artist of the twentieth century. Martinovski was of Vlach origin. He attended the Romanian elementary school, and later the Serbian high school in Skopje. His upbringing demonstrates that the collapse of Ottoman rule in the Balkans might not have ended but defused the competition for Vlach national and cultural identity. The Greek and the Romanian options were now complemented by a Yugoslav one; first in its Serbian version, and from 1944 onwards, in its socialist Macedonian one.

In the wake of events, the Great Powers had urged the Sultan to enact further reforms. Among others, Austria and Russia agreed in Mürzsteg that houses, churches, and schools that were destroyed by Turkish troops should be rebuilt with government money and exempt from all taxes for one year. Criminal assaults by Turkish troops during the uprising were to be investigated. Bashibozouks were no longer to be employed.¹⁰⁸ These were direct consequences of the events in Krushevo. At the same time, the Ottoman state made concessions to the Vlach Romanophiles. Nicolae Batzaria from Krushevo outlined a Romanian national course that did not call the Ottoman Empire into question.¹⁰⁹ In May 1905, the Sultan entitled Vlachs to celebrate mass in their mother tongue and to maintain Romanian schools. Though they were not granted an ecclesiastic province of their own, nationally minded Vlachs had finally reached one of their major goals. Batzaria became a school inspector in Kosovo. However, these concessions did not calm the situation. Instead, the Grecophiles now took to violence. Greek partisans trickled into Macedonia. In Krushevo in March 1908, an assassin murdered the Romanian school patron Nicolae Petrașincu.¹¹⁰ What was left of the Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation in town, equally settled its scores.¹¹¹ With the uprising defeated, violence flared up anew and undermined the memory of brief cooperation across the lines of ethnic and religious tensions.

With the Balkan Wars, the conflict entered a new phase. From now on, the succession of occupying forces rather than competing national movements dominated the scene. When Serbian troops had taken the town in November 1912, the Greek, the Bulgarian, and the Romanian schools were closed. Only the latter was allowed to reopen briefly after peace

¹⁰⁷ BROWN, *The Past in Question*; IDEM, *Loyal unto Death*, 183.

¹⁰⁸ K. U. K. MINISTERIUM DES ÄUSSEREN (ed.), *Diplomatische Aktenstücke über die Reformaktion in Mazedonien 1902-1906*. Vienna 1906, 17-19; Nadine LANGE-AKHUND, *The Macedonian Question 1893-1908 from Western Sources*. Boulder, New York 1998, 142f.

¹⁰⁹ Nicolae BATZARIA / Constantin NOE, *Importanța aromânilor pentru România*. București 2006. On Batzaria's early career see ZBUCHEA, *O istorie*, 79-84.

¹¹⁰ BATZARIA / NOE, *Importanța aromânilor*, 47f.; NISTOR, 'Problema aromână', 216.

¹¹¹ BROWN, *Loyal unto Death*, 9.

had been made in Bucharest.¹¹² Three years later, Bulgarian troops arrived. They plundered the town once more and set the Greek school on fire.¹¹³ In August 1918, they celebrated the anniversary of the Ilinden Uprising.¹¹⁴

Meanwhile, the German zoologist Franz Doflein had come to Krushevo in September 1917, to visit a recreational home for German soldiers. He found much praise for the whitewashed houses (the neatness of which contrasted the Bulgarian villages in the plains) and went on to ponder why there was no traditional architecture: "One finds few traces of an ancient culture of their own among them [the Vlachs]. Even their churches are quite new buildings." Since Doflein was interested mostly in the fresh mountain air and in forest herbs, he seemed to know little of the devastation that had befallen the town fourteen years earlier.¹¹⁵ By its outward appearance at least, Krushevo had begun to recover.

After 1918, the Yugoslav state kept national competition elsewhere. Prominent Greco-philos had left for Salonica. Nicolae Batzaria, who in the meantime had been a minister in the Young Turk government, continued his political and literary career in Bucharest. Nikola Kirov-Majski upheld the Bulgarian banner in Sofia. From here, and from Salonica, the accounts of the Ilinden Uprising in Krushevo received its respective national forms. The new South Slav kingdom either ignored the memory of the uprising or resorted to violent suppression. On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary in 1923, ten demonstrators lost their lives in violent clashes with Serbian police.¹¹⁶

But in Krushevo itself, everyone knew who had stood on which side in 1903, and who had robbed whom. Decades later, even the great-grandchildren would remember how difficult it was to live in a small town with these memories. The Vlach and the Slav quarters isolated themselves. This helped. But economic decline could not be stopped. In the wake of the uprising, the number of inhabitants had fallen below 10,000. The Balkan wars and the First World War caused further drop. In 1921, the town numbered a population of only 3860, tending towards even further decline.¹¹⁷

¹¹² PEYFUSS, *Die aromunische Frage*, 115f.; Katrin BOECKH, *Von den Balkankriegen bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*. München 1995, 353.

¹¹³ Björn OPFER, *Im Schatten des Krieges. Besatzung oder Anschluss – Befreiung oder Unterdrückung? Eine komparative Untersuchung über die bulgarische Herrschaft in Vardar-Makedonien 1915-1918 und 1941-1944*. Münster, 2005, 65; BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 103.

¹¹⁴ OPFER, *Im Schatten des Krieges*, 112.

¹¹⁵ Franz DOFLEIN, *Mazedonien. Erlebnisse und Beobachtungen eines Naturforschers im Gefolge des deutschen Heeres*. Jena 1921, 491.

¹¹⁶ BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 133.

¹¹⁷ Stephanos J. PAPADOPOULOS, *Écoles et associations grecques dans la Macédoine du Nord durant le dernier siècle de la domination turque*, *Balkan Studies* 3(1962), 397-442, here 406; Vangel J. TRPKOSKI-TRPKU, *Vlasite na Balkanot*. Skopje 1986, 80. According to the census of 2002, Krushevo has now recovered to 5,330 inhabitants, among them 1,020 Vlachs: *Popis na naselenieto, domakinstvata i stanovite vo Republika Makedonija, 2002 – kniga X / Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia, 2002 – Book X*, 126 (Online at <<http://www.stat.gov.mk/publikacii/knigaX.pdf>>, August 6, 2015).

During the Second World War, Bulgarian occupation returned to Krushevo. Old tensions were renewed. Those who fought in the Ilinden Uprising were now entitled to a pension. August 2, the anniversary of the uprising, was again celebrated. However, Yugoslav partisans attacked the festivities in 1942. They too claimed the legacy of the uprising and named themselves after Pitu Guli.¹¹⁸

Socialist Yugoslavia picked up on this. From 1948 onwards, former insurgents could apply for a pension, now with the Yugoslav authorities. Keith Brown has gone through hundreds of applications, among them seventy-six from Krushevo.¹¹⁹ He demonstrates how socialist Yugoslavia drew upon local accounts and molded them into a new, Macedonian identity. After five decades of silence, it now became opportune to have participated actively in the uprising and to speak about it. The Ilinden uprising became an inclusive, heroic tale. The Yugoslav state, which in 1903 had seemed the most unlikely option and which had curbed the potential for ethnic violence throughout the interwar years, finally defused it in the 1950s by offering identification with the cause of social revolution.

On the outskirts of the town, a monumental site of remembrance, the Makedonium, gave expression to this achievement. It was launched in 1968 and opened in 1974. The abstract building, designed by Jordan and Iskra Grabul, heralded a utopian future that would leave old conflicts behind. A pantheon of heroes and sites of Macedonian history was added, centered on the social revolutionary tradition of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Ilinden Uprising of 1903 finally became the glorious beginning of Macedonian statehood.¹²⁰ Few of the pensioned rebels were still alive. One could not expect that they would question the embellished tale which honoured their deeds.

But their grandchildren protested. Some did not find the Makedonium to be sufficiently figurative. Others were well aware that their ancestors had adhered to the Bulgarian reading of the events. Local narratives gave competing versions of Pitu Guli's heroic last stand, and of Nikola Karev's presumably pragmatic flight. According to Brown, many families held local knowledge which went beyond the official version and even undermined it. Even if the grandchildren did not condense this knowledge into a coherent narrative, they did claim control over the past. At Mečkin Kamen, Pitu Guli had given his life in defence of the town. The local population now honoured him with a second, figurative monument. With a defiant gesture, it shows a fighter who thrusts a giant rock at his foes.¹²¹

Keith Brown shows a local polity that has learned to cope with old conflicts. They are neither carried on nor denied. In spite of all differences, it can now be conceded that all insurgents fought for the same ideal, that they risked their lives for a free Macedonia that would be a home to all of its peoples. The Krushevo Manifesto heralds precisely this idea.

¹¹⁸ BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 120, 135f.; OPFER, *Im Schatten des Krieges*, 254.

¹¹⁹ BROWN, *The Past in Question*, 126-152.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, 153-180.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, 181-210.

Regardless of any doubts, the inhabitants of Krushevo consider it to be authentic.¹²² In Skopje, this tale neatly fits into a heroic narrative of Macedonian national history. Five oil paintings and several wax figures resurrect the Republic of Krushevo. Eye to eye with Nikola Karev, Pitu Guli, Dinu Vangel, and others, the visitor is included in the unbroken Macedonian strive for political and national freedom.¹²³

There is a price to pay for this, at which Keith Brown only hints. In honouring Vlach participation in the uprising, the heroic tale tends to ignore those who had remained passive, maybe even opposed the Komitadjis, who lost their families, their houses or their property. It does not deny that in August 1903 the town, and mostly its Vlach quarters, was twice destroyed. But the call “not to forget” does not imply the call: “never again!”

Whereas the British consul in Salonica hinted at Vlach instigation, Romanian authorities were uncertain what to make of the events in Krushevo. While the press reported that Vlachs were fighting arm in arm with Bulgarians, the Romanian ambassador to the Sublime Porte cabled that the Vlach population of Krushevo took no part in the uprising.¹²⁴ In Monastir, Taşcu Iliescu and Nicolae Petraşincu denied any Vlach participation with Ottoman authorities. Pitu Guli had allegedly been the only Romanec to take an active part in the fighting, and he had lived for two decades among Bulgarians. Only a few days before, they seem to have told quite a different story to the Romanian consul.¹²⁵ In the immediate aftermath of defeat, it made sense to distance oneself from the uprising, regardless of what had happened. The Romanian government finally supported the Vlach Romanophiles with the substantial sum of 80,000 francs, allegedly under the condition that they would blame the Bulgarians for the events.¹²⁶

The evidence, contradictory as it might be, suggests that national conflict among the Vlach population of Krushevo had indeed played an important role in the uprising. For decades the Bulgarian Exarchate had served Sterju Cionescu, Nicolae Petraşincu, Taşcu Iliescu, Nicolae Balliu, and Nicolae Batzaria as an enticing model. In striving towards national emancipation, the social revolutionary movement and Pitu Guli were welcome allies. During a brief moment of the uprising, the Romanophiles had acted as intermediaries between the Komitadjis and the Grecophile Vlachs and helped to shape the notion of a revolutionary community. The experience of death and destruction then deepened the conflict with the Grecophiles, even more so when the Ottoman state broadened the path towards national emancipation. The cultural conflict had briefly turned into a violent one. Only the socialist detour allowed shaping a community of winners that would also include the

¹²² Ibidem, 203-208.

¹²³ Zoran TODOROVSKI/Violeta ACHKOSKA, Museum of the Macedonian Struggle for Statehood and Independence. Museum of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation. Museum of the Victims of the Communist Regime. Skopje 2012, 120-159.

¹²⁴ MINOV, Vlaškoto prašanje, 401f.

¹²⁵ Ibidem, 404; STOJANOVSKI, Turski dokumenti, 209-212.

¹²⁶ MINOV, Vlaškoto prašanje, 404.

Vlachs. It also covered up the conflict between Romanophiles and Grecophiles. The former Turkish foe had long disappeared from the town. Nor do Muslim Albanians currently play an important role. Dinu Vangel, presumably a Grecophile, is nowadays being revered as the first prime minister of a Macedonian state.

There are not many examples of how to pacify national conflict, least of all in South-eastern Europe. This makes Krushevo a special place. More than a hundred years ago, the European newspaper-reader at safe distance might have despised the brutal destruction that took place in Europe's uncivilised periphery. Nowadays, the very same events feed the vision of a multi-ethnic community. This is not necessarily a contradiction. Krushevo's history reminds us of the violent potential that is inherent in all forms of national emancipation. The memory of such violence has happily been defused. But we should not forget to ask how the violence occurred at all. Nowadays, Krushevo is being turned into an "ethno-town," an open-air museum to turn a tale of heroism, conflict, death, and destruction into kitschy folklore. Opposite the Makedonium, there is a museum for Toše Proeski that attracts new visitors; he was the "Balkan Elvis" who died in a car crash in 2007.

ABSTRACT

The paper traces the events of the 1903 Ilinden Uprising in the predominantly Vlach city of Krushevo. Evidence suggests that the long-standing national conflict within the Vlach population, between traditionally-minded Greek Patriarchists and nationally-minded Romanian nationalists, played an important role in the course of events. For the inhabitants of Krushevo, the uprising turned into a catastrophe. In a remarkable turn of events, national conflict both within the town and with neighbouring Muslim communities was re-framed so as to shape the image of a heroic and inclusive revolutionary community. This mythical image is being evoked until the present day, thus helping to prevent old conflicts from lingering on.

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